

Things Fall Apart tells both a personal and public tragedy: the personal tragedy of Okonkwo as well as the public one of the larger Ibo culture.

HOW DID ACHEBE DO IT?

ANALYSIS ESSAY

How does Chinua Achebe use literary techniques to create the tragic vision of the novel?

- characterization
- diction
- setting
- narrative pace
- use of conflict
- dramatic structure
- irony
- point of view
- foreshadowing
- symbolism
- diction
- use of title/epigraph
- theme

The Rhetorical Situation



Use of first person

“ I ”

DECIDE ON YOUR CLAIM (which techniques
he used) AND FIND SPECIFIC SUPPORT

claim + support = argument

SEQUENCING

Consider appropriate order of points. Is there a way you can order the ideas so that one leads into the next into the next? Build forward momentum toward the big picture.

- ➡ Do you start with techniques clear at the beginning of the novel, and then move into techniques from the middle of the novel, and then discuss how Achebe ends the novel? Maybe his writing changes from beginning to end.
- ➡ Do you start with big obvious techniques and then move into smaller, more subtle techniques?
- ➡ Does discussion of one technique suggest moving then into a related one?

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION:

Opening sentence sets up context for the question.

I mention title and author

Chinua Achebe writes the novel *Things Fall Apart* with a clear sense of hindsight, looking back on the impact of British colonialism in his native Nigeria. Despite some positive impacts, the effects on his traditional Ibo culture is tragic. Achebe uses deliberate literary tools to set up the personal and public tragedy, including diction, point of view, and foreshadowing.

I list all three subpoints I'll discuss in the essay in the order I'll discuss them.

Sequence of sentences in a body paragraph.

1. Topic sentence (focus subpoint of the paragraph as a whole)
2. Sentence setting up idea from one text
3. Quote from one place in the text
4. Follow up from quote (what does this quote show?)
5. Sentence transitioning to second place in the text and setting up that idea
6. Quote from second place in the text
7. Follow up from quote (what does this quote show?)
8. Sentence that summarizes importance of this subpoint to the idea overall

Suggested length = 8+ Sentences total

SAMPLE BODY PARAGRAPH

Topic sentence sets up the ideas of the whole paragraph.

After a quote, give page number. You don't need to state author after the first one since all the citations come from the same source. I pulled just the phrases I found useful from the sentence rather than having to include the whole thing.

Context for quote is same

Achebe uses deliberate diction to introduce the character of the District Commissioner, whose point of view the novel ends with. The District Commissioner warns Obierika not to play "any monkey tricks" (Achebe 207) on their way to discovering Okonkwo, a reminder of how the colonizers saw the Igbo as animals. In the long final paragraph, Achebe allows the reader to see into the Commissioner's mind as he considers how "he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa" (208), but the reader has seen what his version of 'civilization' really is - brutal and destructive violence - so his "toiling" comes across as sarcastic. In this British point of view, Okonkwo's whole life is reduced to ten words: "this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself" (208). Because the diction of the rest of the book has attempted to understand and explain Okonkwo as a round character, the reader sees the irony. In the switch from Ibo control over the area to British control, the reader sees how much was lost in that change.

The period comes after the parentheses - the diction is part of the sentence.

End the paragraph not with a quote or even talking about a specific detail, but by commenting on the significance of your observations.

QUOTATIONS IN ESSAYS

Rule 1: Introduce

Prepare the reader for the quotation before it is inserted. Make its context clear. Where is the quote from? Who is talking? What's going on?

Rule 2: Follow up

Comment on, summarize, or analyze the quotation after it is inserted. Don't just bring it in, dump it down, and expect that to be enough. End the paragraph with your words wrapping up the main point, not on a quote or a specific detail.

Rule 3: Choose carefully and edit for clarity

Quote only as much as is necessary to make your point. Use ellipses (...) to leave out less important sections. Pull out only small bits of a sentence if those bits do the job on their own. Put in brackets [] words you are inserting to make sure it makes sense. [What Paul has done has "[sunk] down in [him] like a stone," creating a heavy weight that will change his life (138).]

QUOTATIONS IN ESSAYS

Rule 4: Long quotations

If 3+ lines, indent on both left and right margins and single space. Do not use quote marks; indentation indicates it is quotation. Double space between your own words and the quoted material.

Rule 5: Parenthetical citation format

End quote - closing quote mark - parenthesis - author - page # - end parenthesis - period

When quoting a quote, use single quote marks inside the larger quote

CONCLUSION

What is important or interesting about Achebe's use of literary tools? How were you personally affected by the choices he made as you read the novel? The conclusion is a place to show clearly, **"So what?"**

PREPARING THE WORKS CITED

Find it for yourself using the book's title page

